

Volume 24



BIBLICAL STUDIES

PROCESSED

FEB 13 2003

GTU LIBRARY

July 2002

IRISH BIBLICAL STUDIES

Editor:

REV PROFESSOR J. C. MCCULLOUGH
Union Theological College
26 College Green, Belfast BT7 1LN
☎: [44] 028 90 20 50 81
Email: jc.mccullough@union.ac.uk

Associate Editor:

REV. PROFESSOR ERNEST BEST
13 Newmill Gardens
St. Andrews KT16 8RY

Assistant Editor:

MRS SANDRA MCKINNEY
Union Theological College
26 College Green, Belfast BT7 1LN

Editorial Advisory Panel:

REV. PAUL FLEMING
REV. PRINCIPAL JAMES HAIRE
REV. DR. DAVID HILL
REV. D. P. KER
DR. J.G. MCCONVILLE
REV. DR. R.J. MCKELVEY
PROFESSOR E. NICHOLSON
REV. PROFESSOR J. C. O'NEILL
MR DAVID PAYNE

Subscriptions:

Individuals: £9.00 Sterling
Institutions: £14.00 Sterling / \$30.00 US / 35 Euro

All subscriptions should be made payable to:
"Irish Biblical Studies" and addressed to the Editor.

IRISH BIBLICAL STUDIES

VOLUME 24, JUNE 2002

ESSAYS IN HONOUR OF

**VERY REV. PROF. JOHN THOMPSON,
B.A., B.D., PH.D., D.D.**

**on the occasion
of his eightieth birthday**

(PART II)

GUEST EDITOR

REV. PROFESSOR STEPHEN N. WILLIAMS M.A., PH.D.

CONTENTS

Maurice Dowling	Proverbs 8:22-31 in the Christology of the Early Fathers	99-117
Thomas J. Norris	A Pioneering Catholic Ecumenist: Igino Giordani.	118-133
R.Alan Russell	Review of: Alan E. Lewis, <i>Between Cross and Resurrection: a Theology of Holy Saturday</i> (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001):	134-144

Editorial

In the April 2002 issue of *Irish Biblical Studies* (volume 24) we drew together some contributions on Barth and on John Thompson, on the occasion of the latter's eightieth birthday. In doing so, we committed two foul errors, for which we now apologise. Firstly, we stripped him of a B.A. on the title page of the journal. Secondly, we drove him into retirement ten years sooner than we should have, in the first paragraph of the editorial. We are glad of this opportunity to restore the academic qualification and the last years of his professional career.

Without the focus on either Karl Barth or John Thompson, we include three further pieces in this number. Maurice Dowling, of the Irish Baptist College in Belfast, focuses on the patristic argument surrounding a text which loomed surprisingly large on the stage of early christological controversies. Thomas Norris, of Maynooth, takes us beyond text and Fathers to a modern ecumenical thinker. And Alan Russell, Presbyterian minister in County Down, reviews the substantial posthumous publication of a volume by Professor Alan Lewis, who was a native of Northern Ireland.

We publish in the confidence that both the range and the substance of the issues covered reflect, within our limits, the theological concerns which Professor Thompson has had over the years.

Proverbs 8:22-31 in the Christology of the Early Fathers

Maurice Dowling

The Ante-Nicene Fathers

In Patristic Christology, the concept of Wisdom became very prominent, and the portrayal of Wisdom in Proverbs 8 - especially vv.22-31 - was one of the most popular OT passages applied to Christ. Even though some early writers occasionally identify Wisdom with the Holy Spirit¹, this is not typical of the Fathers in general. Most Fathers assume without question that the OT Wisdom passages speak of the Son (or Word) of God.²

Justin Martyr quotes Proverbs 8:22ff as part of his argument that the Word (who is divine Wisdom) is distinct yet also inseparable from God:

God begat before all creatures a Beginning, [who was] a certain rational power [proceeding] from Himself, who is called by the Holy Spirit, now the Glory of the Lord, now the Son, again Wisdom, again an Angel, then God, and then Lord and Logos...

He was begotten of the Father by an act of will; just as we see happening among ourselves: for when we give out some word we beget the word; yet not by abscission, so as to

¹ Eg. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 4.20.3 (A.Roberts & J.Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 1, p.488). Theophilus in *Ad Autol.* 2.15 appears to think of the Spirit as Wisdom when he describes the divine *trias* as 'God, his Word, and his Wisdom' (ibid. Vol. 2, p.101), but in 2.10 he applies Prov. 8:22ff to the Son/*Logos* (ibid. p.98).

² Some non-canonical Wisdom passages also find their way into the Patristic repertoire, eg. Baruch 3:29-37 and Wisdom 7:22ff.

lessen the word [which remains] in us, when we give it out: and just as we see also happening in the case of a fire, which is not lessened when it has kindled [another], but remains the same; and that which has been kindled by it like wise appears to exist by itself, not diminishing that from which it was kindled. The Word of Wisdom, who is Himself this God begotten of the Father of all things, and Word, and Wisdom, and Power, and the glory of the begetter, will bear evidence to me, when he speaks by Solomon the following: 'If I shall declare to you what happens daily, I shall call to mind events from everlasting, and review them. The Lord made me the beginning of His ways for His works...' [quoting in full Proverbs 8:21-36; v.21 in the LXX is very different from the MT].³

Athenagoras and Tertullian use the Proverbs passage in the context of their 'two-stage' history of the Word: there is the Word immanent in the mind of God from all eternity, and there is the Word expressed or sent forth for the purposes of creation. Athenagoras and Tertullian make Proverbs 8:22ff refer to the latter 'stage', namely, the extrapolation of the Word for the purpose of creating the world⁴. Athenagoras says:

That we are not atheists, therefore, seeing that we acknowledge one God, uncreated eternal, invisible, impassible, incomprehensible, illimitable, who is apprehended by the understanding only and the reason, who is encompassed by light, and beauty, and spirit, and power ineffable, by whom the universe has been created through His Logos, and set in order, and kept in being - I have sufficiently demonstrated. [I say 'His Logos'], for we acknowledge also a Son of God. Nor let anyone think it ridiculous that God should have a Son. For though the

³ Justin, *Dial.* 61 - *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 1, p.227f

⁴ The two stages correspond to the distinction between λόγος ἐνδιάθετος and λόγος προφορικός in Theophilus, *Ad Autol.* 2.22

poets, in their fictions, represent the gods as no better than men, our mode of thinking is not the same as theirs, concerning either God the Father or the Son. But the Son of God is the Logos of the Father, in idea and in operation; for after the pattern of Him and by Him were all things made, the Father and the Son being one. And, the Son being in the Father and the Father in the Son, in oneness and power of spirit, the understanding and reason [νοῦς καὶ λόγος] of the Father is the Son of God. But if, in your surpassing intelligence, it occurs to you to enquire what is meant by the Son, I will state briefly that He is the first product of the Father, not as having been brought into existence (for from the beginning, God, who is the eternal mind [νῶς], had the Logos in Himself, being from eternity instinct with Logos [logikos]); but inasmuch as he came forth to be the idea and energizing power of all material things, which lay like a nature without attributes, and an inactive earth, the grosser particles being mixed up with the lighter. The prophetic Spirit also agrees with our statements. 'The Lord', it says, 'made me, the beginning of His ways to His works.'⁵

The identification of Wisdom and Logos is even clearer in Tertullian

Now, as soon as it pleased God to put forth into their respective substances and forms the things which He had planned and ordered within Himself, in conjunction with His Wisdom's Reason and Word, He first put forth the Word Himself, having within Him His own inseparable Reason and Wisdom, in order that all things might be made through Him through whom they had been planned and disposed, yea, and already made, so far forth as [they were] in the mind of God. This, however, was still wanting to

⁵ Athenagoras, *Leg.* 10 - *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 2, p.133

them, that they should also be properly known, and kept permanently in their proper forms and substances.

Then, therefore, does the Word also Himself assume His own form and glorious garb, His own sound and vocal utterance, when God says, 'Let there be light'. This is the perfect nativity of the Word, when he proceeds forth from God - formed by Him first to devise and think out all things under the name of Wisdom - 'The Lord created, or formed, me as the beginning of His ways'...The Son likewise acknowledges the Father, speaking in His own person under the name of Wisdom: 'The Lord formed me as the beginning of His ways, with a view to His own works; before all the hills did He beget me'. For if indeed Wisdom in this passage seems to say that she was created by the Lord with a view to His works, and to accomplish His ways, yet proof is given in another Scripture that 'all things were made by the Word, and without Him was there nothing made'.⁶

In Justin, the Proverbs passage is used to demonstrate the distinction between the Logos and the Father, and the priority of the Logos over creation; in Athenagoras and Tertullian it is used to present a picture of the Logos passing from an 'immanent' to an 'expressed' state. The passage is also of some importance for Origen. In his commentary on John 1, Origen expounds his concept of the *ἐπίνοιαι* or different aspects of the person and work of Christ. Among the various *ἐπίνοιαι*, Wisdom occupies a special place, and Origen makes a connection between the words of Proverbs 8:22 in the LXX, κύριος ἔκτισέν με ἀρχὴν ὁδῶν αὐτοῦ εἰς ἔργα αὐτοῦ πρὸ τοῦ αἰῶνος ἐθεμελίωσέν με ἐν ἀρχῇ, and those of John 1:1, Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος. In Origen's understanding, Wisdom is the beginning of all the ways of God 'inasmuch as she contained within

⁶ Tertullian, *Adv. Prax.* 6-7 - *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 3, 9.601f

herself either the beginnings or forms or species of all creation'⁷. This Wisdom, Origen emphasizes, is not an impersonal attribute of God but is in fact the first-born Son of God.⁸ Origen makes use of two meanings of ἀρχή the idea of an actual 'beginning' in the chronological sense, and the idea of a 'principle' according to which the world was made.

Wherefore we have always held that God is the Father of his only-begotten Son, who was born indeed of him, and derives from him what he is, but without any beginning, not only such as may be measured by any divisions of time, but even that which the mind alone can contemplate within itself, or behold, so to speak, with the naked powers of the understanding. And therefore we must believe that Wisdom was generated before any beginning that can either be comprehended or expressed. And since all the creative power of the coming creation was included in this very existence of Wisdom (whether of those things which have an original or of those which have a derived existence), having been performed beforehand and arranged by the power of foreknowledge; on account of these very creatures which had been described, as it were, and prefigured in Wisdom herself, does Wisdom say, in the words of Solomon, that she was created at the beginning of the ways of God, inasmuch as she contained within herself either the beginnings, or forms or species of all creation.⁹

For Christ is, in a manner, the demiurge, to whom the Father says, 'Let there be light', and, 'Let there be a firmament'. But Christ is demiurge as a beginning [ἀρχή] inasmuch as he is Wisdom. It is in virtue of his being Wisdom that he is called ἀρχή. For Wisdom says in

⁷ *De Princ.* I:2:2 - *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 4, p.246

⁸ *ibid.* I:2:1

⁹ *ibid.* I:2:2

Solomon: 'God created me, the beginning of his ways, for his works'...Consider, however, if we are at liberty to take this meaning of ἀρχή for our text, 'In the beginning was the Word', so as to obtain the meaning that all things came into being according to Wisdom and according to the models of the system which are present in his thoughts. For I consider that as a house or a ship is built and fashioned in accordance with the sketches of the builder or designer, the house or the ship having their beginning [ἀρχή] in the sketches and reckonings in his mind, so all things came into in accordance with the designs of what was to be, clearly laid down by God in Wisdom.¹⁰

The first hint that Proverbs 8:22ff might be the occasion of controversy comes with 'the affair of the two Dionysii' in the third century, an affair which may be said to have anticipated the Arian controversy of the fourth. In the fragments which remain from Dionysius of Alexandria, there is no direct allusion to Proverbs 8, but from the letter of Dionysius of Rome to his Alexandrian namesake, it would appear that the latter had used Proverbs 8 as part of his argument against the Sabellians.¹¹ Dionysius of Alexandria apparently interpreted the word ἐκτισέν of Prov.8:22 too literally for the liking of the Roman bishop. In his zeal to refute the Sabellians, the Alexandrian Dionysius so stressed the distinction between the Father and the Son, with the help of Proverbs 8 and other texts, that he gave the impression that they belonged to distinct orders of being - the Father being the Creator and the Son being created - and he used two illustrations which seemed to confirm this impression: the relationship between the farmer and the vine and that between the ship and the shipbuilder. Athanasius, in *De sententia Dionysii*, works hard to present Dionysius of Alexandria in the best possible light, arguing that the Arians have

¹⁰ *Comm. in Ioh. I:22 - Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 10, p.307f

¹¹ The Roman Dionysius' letter is preserved in Athanasius, *De Decretis* 26 - *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: Second Series* (P.Schaff & H.Wace), Vol. 4, p.167f

no right to claim him as their 'partisan'¹², whereas Basil of Caesarea felt that Dionysius had fallen into 'the opposite error' to Sabellius¹³. Whatever may have been the precise beliefs of Dionysius of Alexandria, that particular 'affair' ended peaceably. The same cannot be said of the Arian controversy.

The fourth century

Arius and his kin appealed to a number of Biblical texts in order to support their subordinationist Christology. They made use of any passage which described the Father as the one and true God, or which represented the Son as in any way inferior or subordinate to the Father, or which portrayed Christ as being subject to limitations and emotions incompatible with being divine, or which suggested that the Son did in fact have a beginning. Inevitably, Prov.8:22ff proved to be an important weapon in the Arian arsenal. The three main verbs of vv.22-25 were treated as synonyms: 'The Lord created (ἐκτίσεν) me...established (ἐθεμελίωσεν) me...begets (γεννᾷ) me.'¹⁴

As far as the Arians were concerned, the meaning of this passage was clear. The Son (i.e. the Word or Wisdom of God) was a creature. The key verbs of Prov.8:22ff occur in Arius' letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia, where he writes of the Son: 'Before he was begotten or created or ordained or established he was not, for he was not unbegotten.'¹⁵ There is also a clear echo of the Proverbs passage in Arius' letter to Alexander:

¹² *De sent. Dion.* 19 - *ibid.* p.183.

¹³ Basil, *Ep.* 9 - *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: Second Series*, Vol. 8, p.123

¹⁴ A.Rahlf's, *Septuaginta*, Vol.II, p.196

¹⁵ H-G.Opitz, *Urkunden zur Geschichte des Arianischen Streites, 318-328* (*Athanasius Werke* III:1, Leipzig, 1934), p.3

God, being the cause of all things, is unbegun and altogether unique, but the Son, being begotten apart from time by the Father, and being created and established before ages, was not before being begotten.¹⁶

Similarly, Eusebius of Nicomedia wrote to Paulinus of Tyre in the following terms:

We have learned that [the Son] was created and established and begotten in substance and in an unchangeable and inexpressible nature and in likeness to him who made him, as the Lord himself says: 'God created me the beginning of his ways, and he established me before time began; he begets me before all the hills'.¹⁷

Proverbs 8:22ff was a passage which, in the opinion of the Arians, spoke plainly of the creaturely nature of the Son and his inferiority to the Father. In their eyes, the text obviously referred to the pre-incarnate Son; it could not be made to refer to the humanity of Christ. The Arians found a powerful weapon in Proverbs 8. They were following the standard line of interpretation in applying these verses to the pre-incarnate Son, and Marcellus of Ancyra's attempt to counter the Arians by applying the passage to the Incarnation suffered from all the disadvantages of apparent novelty. Marcellus' interpretation could be regarded as not only novel, but also forced. Certain other 'subordinationist' texts, particularly those referring to the person of Jesus Christ (e.g. 'The Father is greater than I'), could with some justification be interpreted as references to the *οἰκονομία κατὰ σάρκα* rather than to the being of the Son himself. This device was not so convincing when applied to Proverbs 8.

We shall consider in more detail Marcellus' interpretation of the Proverbs passage, because he was one of the principal opponents of Arianism in the period 320-345, although he is much less well

¹⁶ *ibid.* p.13

¹⁷ *ibid.* p.16

known than Athanasius¹⁸. Before doing so, we should note that, with the exception of people mentioned, but not named, by Gregory of Nazianzus¹⁹, the Arians' opponents did not attempt to outflank them on the interpretation of Proverbs 8 by the strategy of arguing that this passage speaks figuratively and poetically of a divine attribute, rather than concretely of a divine person. Fourth-century readers generally accepted without question that the personal language of the Proverbs passage indicated a divine person, and that, since Christ was the Wisdom of God (as explicitly stated in I Cor.1:24), it was obviously Christ that the passage was describing. One way of countering the Arian interpretation was foreshadowed by Origen, whose Christology makes important use of the concepts of 'generation' and 'eternal generation'. Origen saw the phrase 'begets me' of Prov.8:25 as the key to the whole passage. It is clear from several parts of Origen's work that for him the relationship between the Father and the Son was most fitly described using the verb γεννάω, rather than κτίζω or θεμελιόω. Origen points out that Prov.8:25 makes a significant use of the present tense, 'begets' indicating a continual generation.²⁰ There is a hint of a similar approach to Proverbs 8 in a letter of Dionysius of Rome which Athanasius has preserved. Referring to Prov. 8:22, the Roman bishop insists that the verb 'to create' may have different meanings and that in this passage it cannot possibly mean 'to make' in the sense of 'to bring into being'. In support of his argument, Dionysius cites Ps.110 (LXX Ps.109):3, Prov.8:25 and Col.1:15. He comments: 'In many passages of the divine oracles the Son is said to

¹⁸ References will be made to the fragments of Marcellus preserved by Eusebius of Caesarea and found in E.Klostermann (ed.), *Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte. Eusebius Werke IV* (Leipzig, 1906).

¹⁹ *Cataphetical Orations* 4:2

²⁰ *Hom. in Ierem* 9:4 (GCS Origen 3, p.70). In contrast to his use of γεννάω, Origen betrays a certain diffidence about using κτίζω when speaking of the Son: 'God having created the Son, as it were... (*Comm. in Ioh.* 1:19; GCS Origen 4, p.24)

have been begotten (γεννηθῆσθαι) but nowhere to have come into being (γεγονέναι).²¹

During the course of the Arian controversy, a number of writers had occasion to comment on Proverbs 8:22ff, and some followed a line similar to what we find in Origen and Dionysius. Eusebius of Caesarea in effect argued that the verb ‘created’, of v.22, did not mean what the Arians claimed. The context of Eusebius’ principal discussion of the Proverbs passage is his polemic against Marcellus in *De Ecclesiastica Theologia* 3. Although he does not mention Arius by name here, Eusebius is clearly arguing that the Church is not faced with a stark choice between Marcellus’ exegesis (ie. applying Proverbs 8 to the Incarnation) and that of the Arians. In fact, some time before the controversy over Marcellus’ views, and possibly before Arius had become notorious, Eusebius had had occasion to comment on Prov.8:22 in his *Demonstratio Evangelica*. Here he comments that, although v.22 indicates that Wisdom is a γενητόν, this term is to be understood in a qualified sense, making it closer in meaning to γέννημα.²² When dealing with the proverbs passage in more detail in *De Ecclesiastica Theologia* 3;2, Eusebius argues that the passage proves that God and the Wisdom which figures in Proverbs 8 are not one and the same: the Wisdom of this text is not merely an accident or a predicate (α συμβαμα - a word rarely found in early Christian writers)²³. This Wisdom is, in fact, the Word or Son of God, of whom Paul said, ‘...Christ, the power of God and the Wisdom of God’²⁴. Eusebius has no doubt that the words of Prov.8:22ff are spoken by the Son, and he argues:

²¹ Dionysius is quoted in Athanasius, *De Decretis* (Migne, *Patrologia Graeca* 25, 464D-465A).

²² *Dem.ev.* 5:1 (GCS Eusebius 6, p.210ff).

²³ GCS Eusebius 4, p.139

²⁴ I Cor.1:24

Even if he says that he was created, he does not mean this in the sense of passing from non-existence into existence, not that he too, like all the other creatures, was made out of nothing, as some have supposed in error; but rather that he subsists and lives, being before and existing before the creation of the whole world, having been ordained to rule over all things by the Lord, his Father, and the passage says 'created' rather than 'ordained' or 'appointed'.²⁵

Eusebius cites other passages from Scripture to show that 'to create' is not always used in the absolute sense of 'to bring into being out of nothing'; it is sometimes used μεταφορικός.²⁶ However, Eusebius' main point of originality lies not so much in these arguments as in his appeal to the Hebrew text, no doubt through the medium of Origen's *Hexapla*. Eusebius points out that in the Greek versions produced by Aquila, Theodotion and Symmachus, we find that Prov.8:22 has ἐκτήσατο - 'possessed' or 'acquired' - rather than the ἔκτισέν of the LXX. Eusebius agrees that ἐκτήσατο (from κτάομαι) is a more accurate rendering of the original Hebrew (i.e. the verb *qanah*, which Eusebius does not mention as such), and he argues that, whereas κτίσις is popularly understood as implying the transition from non-existence to existence, κτήσις on the other hand indicates a relationship between that which is already in existence and the one who does the 'possessing':

Therefore, when the Son of God says: 'The Lord possessed (ἐκτήσατο) me as the beginning of his ways for his works', he was declaring both his pre-existence and his unique relationship to the Father, and at the same time the value

²⁵ GCS Eusebius 4, p.140. In answer to these comments, the Arians might well have asked why, if the Son was in fact 'ordained' to rule over all things, the text in question does not actually say 'ordained' but rather 'created'!

²⁶ GCS Eusebius 4, p.141. Eusebius quotes Amos 4:13, Ps.51:10, Eph.2:15; 4:24, II Cor.5:17.

and necessity of his own personal care and control of his Father's works.²⁷

Eusebius points out at some length Marcellus' insistence that the whole passage refers to the flesh which the Saviour assumed.²⁸ The amount of space which Eusebius devotes to Marcellus' interpretation is an indication of the strong feelings which he held on the matter. What annoyed Eusebius was not that Marcellus took issue with the Arians over Proverbs, but rather the way in which he did so.

The factor which shapes Marcellus' interpretation of Prov.8:22-31 is the conviction that the passage refers to the Incarnation of the Word. He appears to accept without question the reading ἔκτισέν με, of v.22, but he insists that this refers to the δεύτερα οἰκονομία. When we refer to the origin of Christ's humanity 'it is fitting to speak of "creation"'.²⁹ The Lord created the Saviour through the Virgin Mary³⁰, and in this connection Marcellus has no difficulty accepting that the ἔκτισέν of Prov.8:22 means 'brought into existence':

God our master, when he made what had not existed, truly created. For what 'he created as the beginning of his ways'

²⁷ GCS Eusebius 4, p.143. Gregory of Nyssa, writing against the latter-day Arian Eunomius, also draws attention to the original Hebrew behind Prov.8:22. However, Gregory is prepared to accept the rendering which Eunomius is using and his main thrust is that the verse does in fact refer to the Incarnation: 'He was created when he became man'; 'The words "created me" do not proceed from the divine and immortal nature but from that which was commingled with it in the Incarnation from our created nature...The sense of "created me" has reference to the humanity'. (*Cont. Eunom.* 2:10; 3:2)

²⁸ GCS Eusebius 4, p.144

²⁹ Marcellus, fragment 9. Klostermann, p.187

³⁰ Marcellus, fragment 10. Klostermann, p.187

was not flesh which already existed and which the Word then assumed, but rather that which did not exist.³¹

According to Marcellus, when Scripture speaks of Christ prophetically in the words: 'The Lord created me the beginning of his ways', we are to see this as relating to the 'ways' established by the incarnate Lord:

It was therefore right, since old things had passed away and all things were about to become new through the new life of our Saviour, that our master Christ should declare through the prophet, 'The Lord created me the beginning of his ways'.³²

For to us who intend to live righteously he is the way to the fear of God, the beginning of all ways that lead from here.³³

He rightly calls our master and Saviour 'the beginning of ways', because he is the beginning also of all the other ways that we have had that come after the first way. This signifies the traditions of the holy apostles who have, in accordance with the prophecy, proclaimed to us this new mystery 'in the most exalted of proclamations'.³⁴

Similarly, when Proverbs 8:22 says: 'The Lord created me the beginning of his ways *for his works*', we are to understand these 'works' as meaning those of the incarnate Word, the works to which Christ referred when he said: 'My Father works until now, and so do I', and: 'I have completed the work which you gave me'.³⁵

³¹ Marcellus, fragment 11. Klostermann, p.187

³² Marcellus, fragment 12. Klostermann, p.187

³³ Marcellus, fragment 13. Klostermann, p.187

³⁴ Marcellus, fragment 14. Klostermann, p.187

³⁵ Marcellus, fragment 15. Klostermann, p.187

Moving on to Proverbs 8:23 - πρὸ τοῦ αἰῶνος ἔθεμελίωσέν με ἐν ἀρχῇ - Marcellus says that the use of the singular αἰῶνος is significant. In his opinion, it refers to the 'age' which follows the ministry of the incarnate Word. The text does not say πρὸ τῶν αἰώνων (plural) and so Proverbs 8 cannot be referring to the foundation of the Son 'before the ages'³⁶. Asterius, the 'Arian' against whom Marcellus was writing, had obviously interpreted the verbs 'created', 'established' and 'begets' in terms of the creation of the Son 'before the ages', just as Arius himself had said of the Son: 'Begotten outside time by the Father, created and established before the ages, before being begotten he was not'³⁷. As well as insisting that there is a fundamental difference between 'age' and 'ages', Marcellus argues that the verb 'established', like 'created', refers to the incarnation, the κατὰ σάρκα οἰκονομία. The Apostle Paul had said: 'No man can lay any other foundation than the one laid, which is Christ Jesus', and so it is obvious that Proverbs 8:23 speaks of the laying of a 'foundation' in Christ.³⁸ Marcellus anticipates his opponents' argument that the phrase 'before the age' (πρὸ τοῦ αἰῶνος) implies a divine activity at some time before the incarnation; in other words they would interpret the text as meaning: 'Before the age [of the incarnation] he established me'. Marcellus responds by saying that, because both the purpose of God and also the prophesying of the new dispensation existed *before* the age of the incarnation, the phrase 'before the age' is quite appropriate.

Just as the Almighty God long ago foreordained the Church, so in his thought he first laid the foundations of the dispensation of Christ in the flesh, through whom he purposed to call the race of godly men 'unto adoption'.³⁹

³⁶ Marcellus, fragment 17. Klostermann, p.187f

³⁷ Arius to Alexander. Opitz, *Urkunde* 6 (p.13)

³⁸ Marcellus, fragments 17-18. Klostermann, p.187f

³⁹ Marcellus, fragment 19. Klostermann, p.188

Though this new mystery has been revealed in what are indeed the last times, yet because this was foreordained before this age it was appropriate that the prophecy should say, 'Before this age he laid my foundations'.⁴⁰

Eusebius preserves for us Marcellus' allegorical interpretations of the various phrases used in Proverbs 8:24-25. According to Marcellus, 'before the earth was made' refers to human flesh, which Scripture describes as 'earth' ('dust').⁴¹ Marcellus rather tortuously applies this phrase to the healing of human nature through the work of Christ, rather than simply to the flesh which Christ assumed.⁴² 'Before the oceans were made' (v.24) refers to 'the hearts of the saints, which in their depths have the gift of the Spirit'.⁴³

As for what is said next - 'Before the springs of water came forth' - Marcellus takes this as a reference to the Apostles. Why he should do so is not immediately obvious, but it becomes clearer when we bear in mind a traditional interpretation of the twelve springs of Elim mentioned in Exodus 15:27. Tertullian⁴⁴ and Origen⁴⁵ saw the twelve springs as a type of the Apostles, who were commissioned to evangelize and to baptize all nations, and, going a step further than them, Marcellus links together Exodus 15:27, Matthew 28:19 and Proverbs 8:24b: 'And so the Saviour said to the holy springs, 'Go and make disciples of all nations'.⁴⁶ The next verse, v.25, is also interpreted as referring to the Apostles:

⁴⁰ Marcellus, fragment 20. Klostermann, p.188

⁴¹ An allusion to Genesis 2:7 and 3:19.

⁴² Marcellus, fragment 21. Klostermann, p.188

⁴³ Marcellus, fragment 22. Klostermann, p.188.

⁴⁴ *Adv. Marcionem* IV:13:4 (*Corpus Christianorum: Series Latina*, Tertullian Vol.1, p.572f)

⁴⁵ *Hom in Ex.* 7:3 (*GCS Origen* Vol.6, p.207f)

⁴⁶ Marcellus, fragment 25. Klostermann, p.189

He says, 'Before the mountains were set in place, and before all the hills, he begets me'. By 'mountains' and 'hills' he means the Apostles and the Apostles' successors, indicating by a figure of speech how righteously they lived compared with other men.⁴⁷

Again, Marcellus was following a line of interpretation which was not altogether novel. In Hippolytus⁴⁸ and in Origen⁴⁹, we find examples where the mountains and hills mentioned in the Old Testament are seen as prophetic references to the Apostles.

As for the latter part of Proverbs 8:22-31, Marcellus has to make a rigid division between vv.22-25 and the rest of the passage. Verses 22-25 are made to refer to the Incarnation, with the help of a good deal of typological exegesis. However, Marcellus would have found himself in real difficulties if he had tried to force this line of interpretation consistently in the following six verses. He is content, it seems, to accept that vv.26-31 refer to the creation of the world through the Word:

Since it was not possible that God should consider the creation of the heavens apart from his Word and the wisdom the belongs to the Word, Scripture has rightly said, 'When he set out the heavens I was with him'.⁵⁰

For before the world existed the Word was in the Father. When Almighty God decided to make all things in heaven and on earth, the origin of the universe required an active, efficient force. For this reason, since there was no one apart from God (for, as everyone agrees, all things were made by him), the Word came forth and became the maker of the

⁴⁷ Marcellus, fragment 27. Klostermann, p.189

⁴⁸ *De Benedic. Jacobi* 27, C.Diobouniotis & N.Beis ed., p.12

⁴⁹ *Comm. in Cant.* 3 (GCS Origen Vol.8, pp.201, 205)

⁵⁰ Marcellus, fragment 59. Klostermann, p.195

universe, he who first of all prepared it in thought within his own being, as Solomon the prophet teaches us when he says...[Prov.8:27-30].⁵¹

Eusebius of Caesarea points out the obvious fact that '[h]e who said, 'When he set out the heavens I was with him', was the same as he that said, 'The Lord created me the beginning of his ways for his works'.⁵² He points out the basic weakness in Marcellus' interpretation: 'If it was the flesh which said, 'Before the oceans were made, before the springs of water...', it follows that, 'When he set out the heavens I was with him', must also be said on behalf of the flesh!'⁵³ How Marcellus would have replied to this charge of inconsistency we can only guess.

Marcellus' interpretation of Proverbs 8 is an excellent example of his opposition to Arianism and of his desire to maintain the unity of the Godhead at all costs. However, he is rather vague as to who exactly is speaking in this passage. If the Word is the subject of the whole passage then he appears to speak as someone who has a distinct existence - something which does not fit easily into Marcellus' theology. If the incarnate Word (ie., in Marcellus, the Son) is the subject, then vv.27ff would mean that the *incarnate* Word, and not simply *the Word*, co-operated with the Father in the work of creation. If the whole of the passage is essentially poetic language, where divine wisdom is personalized and the role of divine wisdom in creation and providence is dramatized, then many of the problems created by the Arian interpretation are solved. Marcellus tackles the passage with the assumption that it speaks specifically of the divine Word (as distinct from the Father) rather than of wisdom as a divine attribute. Consequently, he rather ties himself in knots by arguing that vv.22-25 speak of the incarnate Word, whereas vv.26-30 speak of the Word or Wisdom through which the world was made.

⁵¹ Marcellus, fragment 60. Klostermann, p.196

⁵² *De Eccles. Theol.* 3:3. (GCS Eusebius Vol.4, p.153)

⁵³ *ibid.* (p.154)

Athanasius attempted a similar line of interpretation of Proverbs 8, although he made a strict distinction between ἔκτισέν (v.22) and γεννᾷ (v.25). Anxious to counter the Arian argument that, according to v.22, the Son is a creature, Athanasius claimed that ἔκτισέν με referred to the humanity of Christ.⁵⁴ Similarly, the clause πρὸ τοῦ αἰῶνος ἔθεμελίωσέν με referred, Athanasius says, to the purpose which the which God had of building his church upon Christ;⁵⁵ γεννᾷ με, on the other hand, refers to the unique relationship between the Father and the Son, a relationship which distinguishes the Son altogether from the category of created beings.⁵⁶ Athanasius' interpretation of these verses is in some ways more satisfying because it avoids the strained exegesis which we find in Marcellus, but Athanasius too is open to the charge of inconsistency in his handling of Proverbs 8:22-31.

Another interpretation - also involving a sharp distinction between ἔκτισέν and γεννᾷ - is that of Gregory of Nazianzus. In the *Fourth Theological Oration*, he argues that in studying what Scripture says about the Son we should adopt the principle of 'attributing to the deity the higher and diviner expressions, and the lower and more human to him who for us men was the Second Adam'.⁵⁷ Gregory is prepared to accept the view of 'the sacrilegious robbers of the Bible and the thieves of the sense of its contents' that Proverbs 8:22 refers to 'our Saviour himself, the true Wisdom'.⁵⁸ But whereas 'created me' refers to the humanity of Christ' (because 'created' implies a cause and therefore cannot refer to his deity), the phrase 'begets me' (v.25) does not admit the idea of a cause. Therefore: 'Wisdom is called a creature in connection with the lower generation, but

⁵⁴ *Contra Ar.* 2:46 - *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: Second Series*, Vol.4, p.373

⁵⁵ *ibid.* 2:73-77 (p.388ff)

⁵⁶ *ibid.* 2:57-61 (p.379ff)

⁵⁷ *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: Second Series*, Vol.7, p.309

⁵⁸ *ibid.* p.309f

begotten in respect of the first and more incomprehensible.⁵⁹ Gregory is aware of people who interpret the words of Proverbs 8 'as those of Wisdom herself...For Scripture personifies many even lifeless objects'.⁶⁰ But he does not specify which writers he has in mind and he makes it clear that he does not agree with them.

Conclusion

A major feature of the controversies of the fourth century was the tendency to make certain passages of Scripture into battlefields, or strategic points which must be captured if the campaign as a whole is to be successful. Certainly, the exegesis of Scripture is not a task which Christian theology can afford to neglect. If Scripture means anything at all, then it is worth taking the trouble to find out what that meaning is. However, it has perhaps been overlooked that what is important is the totality of the Biblical witness. In doctrinal controversies there is always the danger that certain passages become isolated as all-important, while the rest of Scripture is treated as almost superfluous. The exegesis of Scripture obviously entails the exegesis of specific passages and, indeed, of individual words, but too often this exercise can become a scouring of Scripture for proof-texts to be used in defence of established positions. This article has concentrated on one passage which was used as a weapon by different sides during the Arian controversy. One wonders if the energy expended in pressing such a text into service really contributed to a better understanding of the passage in its Biblical context.

Maurice Dowling

⁵⁹ *ibid.* p.309

⁶⁰ *ibid.*

A Pioneering Catholic Ecumenist: Igino Giordani

Thomas J. Norris

Igino Giordani (1894-1980), the great Italian writer, theologian and politician, was also a passionate ecumenist. As a writer, he produced almost one hundred books: he has been called 'the Chesterton of Italy'. As a theologian, he was enamoured of the Fathers of the early Church, in whom he discerned the diarists of the undivided Church's youth. As a politician, he was in contact with the forces that were shaping the cultural and political map of Europe: returning from active service in World War I, decorated for bravery and badly wounded, he saw the need for politics in its classical form as the noble ideal of the sincere service of the good of the human community. But it is arguable that it was his involvement in ecumenical endeavour that gave his life its direction and *élan*. And it seems strangely appropriate that the principal biographer of this ecumenist from the South hails from the North, in fact, from Scotland. His name is Edwin Robertson and he is a Baptist Pastor: his biography of Giordani, *The Fire of Love*,¹ has proven to be a best seller.

In this article, I wish to focus on Giordani's ecumenical vocation. To that end I will outline, in a first section, the story of his conversion to work for unity and rapprochement between the followers of Jesus Christ in pre-war America and Italy. In a second section, I will deal with his discovery of the spirituality that fired and drove his ecumenism, the spirituality of Chiara Lubich and the *focolare* movement. In a third and final section, I will exegete some of the scriptural passages underpinning this surprisingly ecumenical

¹ Edwin Robertson, *The Fire of Love*, London: New City, 1989. He is well known for his translation and editing of the works of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. He has been a director of the World Association of Christian Broadcasting and Assistant Head of Religious Broadcasting at the BBC.

spirituality of unity that continues to grow in its capacity to energize the noble enterprise of uniting all Christians.

I. The Story of a Vocation to build the Unity of Christians

The modern ecumenical movement began within the Protestant Churches and communities. The immediate stimulus of the movement, as surprising as it was fascinating, seems to have been the experience of the missionaries who found themselves preaching a divided Christ. They felt acutely the chastisement of St Paul to the Corinthian Christians: 'Has Christ been parcelled out?' (I Cor 1:12). They realized that the holy cause of preaching the Gospel of Christ, who came 'to gather together the scattered children of God' (Jn 11:52), was deeply hindered, if not actually undermined, by the unpalatable phenomenon of divided followers of his Gospel of Unity. They realized, further, that this contradicted directly the will of Christ, and scandalized the men and women of good will to whom they wanted to bring the Gospel. 'How can we believe you Christians? You are all divided', was a comment that pained more than a few Christian missionaries in faraway continents.

Iginio Giordani's ecumenical vocation had similar beginnings. Between August 1927 and May 1928, Giordani made a significant sojourn in the United States. There he encountered at first hand the phenomenon of Protestantism. It was different to the Protestantism that he knew from his knowledge of its 'homeland' in Europe. It was in fact the Reformation as transported to and re-planted in the New World. The tearing of Christ's seamless Robe had been put on display, as it were, in another Continent.

Upon returning to Italy, he took up a post in the Vatican Library. He began to read the Fathers of the Church. They put him in contact with the call of the Gospel in a way that seemed remarkably fresh. In particular, he encountered the ardour with which they cultivated the vivid awareness of the unity of Christians and the Church. He read, for example, in Cyprian of Carthage (*c.* 200-258) that the Church was "a people made one with the unity of the Father, the

Son and the Holy Spirit”²: to be divided was to sully the very image of the Godhead! He read the long treatises of Ambrose and Augustine and Chrysostom until there rose up before him the pristine image of a dynamic Christianity that anathematised heresy, condemned disunity, and drove out the dividers in each age. He now understood better the reasons for his pain at the fracturing of Christendom that seemed to have gone into the whole world.

Shortly after this, in 1932, he was appointed editor of *Fides*, a review of a theological nature published in the Vatican. The appointment was a providential opportunity to arouse in Catholics the realization that ecclesial unity was of the utmost importance in order to correspond to the dying wish of the Lord, ‘May they all be one’ (Jn 17:21). Catholics could not stand back from doing their part in removing the obstacles to an effective evangelization of a Europe increasingly in need of hearing the living word of Christ. Giordani’s was a new and influential voice.

As a pioneer of ecumenism in the Catholic milieu, however, he was not alone: already there was the Abbé Paul Couturier in France and Fr Max Pribilla in Germany, personages that were like beacons of ecumenical light for Catholics. An early commentator once listed Giordani in the company of the two just mentioned, calling him, erroneously, a “Jesuit Father”: it pointed to the rarity in those days of Catholic laymen studying theology or editing theological reviews! In the pages of the monthly review, *Fides*, which he was destined to direct for thirty years, he had the opportunity to promulgate and advance the ecumenical imperative, beginning in Italy but expanding far beyond.³ In 1939, he published a volume on the unity of the Church, *The Protestant Crisis and the Unity of the Church*. A reviewer in Chicago wrote that the work was evidence of the rise of an ecumenical interest among Catholics in Europe.

² St Cyprian, *On the Lord's Prayer*, PL 4, col. 553.

³ For a comprehensive list of his contributions to *Fides*, consult Tommaso Sorgi, *Giordani. Segni di tempi nuovi*, Roma: Città Nuova Editrice, 1994, 184-6.

His style in ecumenism at this time was more confrontational than dialogical. A reviewer of his translation of the *Apologeticum* of Tertullian (c. 160-220) commented that the text of Tertullian sounded irenic by comparison with the polemical tone of Giordani's *Introduction* to the translation! Someone reading today his vigorous and theologically acute articles in the pages of *Fides* would be likely to find their tone and style somewhat polemical and unyielding. However, by the eve of World War II, the impact of *Fides* was felt not only in Italy, but well beyond. Its articles, which were lively in form and solid in substance, enjoyed a resonance particularly in the ecumenical field.

II. A transforming Encounter: Giordani meets Chiara Lubich and the *Focolare*

In September 1948, Giordani, then a member of parliament, met Chiara Lubich and a number of friends who had come to meet the learned editor of *Fides*, whose ideas they had noticed. The little group impressed Giordani. What struck him most was their unity: although they came from many different backgrounds and represented different states of life in the Church, an atmosphere of harmony seemed to obtain between them. He could feel this. They were in fact a kind of microcosm of that unity of mind and heart that the Christians of the *Acts of the Apostles* exemplified (Acts 4:32), the communion that distinguished the first Christians and attracted new members daily (Acts 2:47). He realized that Chiara Lubich and her friends had discovered that the practical daily living of the words of the Gospel was the way of life. In particular, they had discovered the ideal of Jesus, 'May they all be one. Father, as you and I are one may they be one in us so that the world will believe' (Jn 17: 21).

Chiara Lubich, who had been a schoolteacher, discovered during the height of the War in 1943, in her native Trent, that only God remains. Everything else passes away: it is vanity of vanities (Ecclesiastes 1:2). The prevalence of death enabled Chiara and a number of her young friends to put God in the first place in their lives, to choose him as the ideal of their lives. In 1943 there were air-raids on Trent every day, sometimes as many as five or six times, since Trent was the railhead of German supplies for their

forces in Italy. Chiara and her companions had to run to the air-raided shelters as often as six times some days. The only book they brought with them was a copy of the Gospels. They opened it and read sentences like: "Give, and there will be gifts for you" (Lk 6:38); "You must love your neighbour as yourself" (Mt 22:39; Lev 19:18; Jm 2:8); "I was sick and you visited me" (Mt 25:36). They received a grace to understand and, more importantly, to put these words into practice at once. They put the words into practice, and they worked! The sentences of the Gospel seemed made for the appalling situations around them, a true antidote to the mutual hatred of the war. The Holy Spirit and the situation conspired together to underline these living words highlighting those dealing with love towards God and others.

Two such texts struck them with force. They were: "I give you a new commandment that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another/ This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (Jn 13:34; 15:12) and: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? (Mk 15:34; Mt 27:46). The first, Jesus described as "the new commandment" and particularly "his own". The second describes the summit of his suffering in both Matthew and Mark: because Jesus is the Son of God, he is love, but too much love made him feel forsaken, and in this he appeared merely a man, indeed, a worm and no man (Ps 22:6). The little group began to notice a close connection between the two evangelical sentences that initially seemed far apart. The connection came via the little word, 'as' (καθώς) in the New Commandment. Jesus had loved us all the way to the cross of Golgotha and the God-forsakenness that he experiences at this summit moment of his love for the Father when he gives his life as ransom for humanity (Mk 10:45). The little word 'as' identified a love that was a love without measure. One day, Chiara Lubich and her young friends realized that the New Commandment represented the deepest desire of the Saviour's heart *and* that he had lived it in regard to sinful humanity to the point of the abandonment by the Father on Calvary. The realization prompted them to make a pact of unity to be ready to die for each other: the new commandment of Jesus required nothing less! If they lived it, they would be one mind and one heart (Acts 4:32), and the world would believe (Jn 13:35;

17:21).

The hostilities of war ceased in the Summer of 1945. The little group around Chiara had grown vastly in number. Their evangelical life began to attract many new people, young and old, lay and clerical. Within a few months of the end of the war, there were hundreds of people in Trent and its environs who wanted to live by the words of the Gospel. They aimed at a spiritual and material sharing of goods. They attracted others by a certain quality of unity and presence; later, they realized the secret of this presence. Jesus had promised that where two or three are united in his name, he should be in their midst (Mt 18:20). He had made good his promise. Living among the children of men, would he not do again those extraordinary things that he had done and had promised to do in the days of his flesh? The ever-enlarging group was soon nicknamed by those who knew them, 'the *focolare*', which is the Italian word for the fireplace or hearth. The symbol seemed strangely appropriate since the hearth is the place where friends feel drawn together by a warmth in their midst. And is it not the delight of God to live among his own and so continue the pitching of his tent among us (Jn 1:14)?

An early episode highlights the explosive ecumenical potential of such a Gospel-based way of life. In 1961, a number of pastors of the Lutheran Church in Germany heard of these young people in sunnier climates south of the Alps. These pastors decided to investigate. They went to meet Chiara Lubich. After the encounter, they were amazed and exclaimed: 'What? Catholics living the Gospel?' They expressed at once the desire that the spirituality of the *focolare* would spread into the Lutheran Church. Ecumenical contacts with Anglicans, the Reformed, and the Orthodox were soon to follow.

This was the way of life that Igino Giordani met on the fateful day in parliament buildings in Rome in September 1948. He was drawn at once to live out his faith in this evangelical fashion. The emerging spirituality's emphasis on unity, on life before theory, on mutual love, on the dominical desire that 'all be one' won his allegiance and fired his will to action. Now he had found a spirituality that opened up vistas undreamed of for his ardent spirit. He saw in Chiara and her companions the DNA of a spirituality that

was as ecumenical as it was evangelical. He had found the motor to drive the ecumenism that had already claimed the allegiance of his mind and heart. Chiara gave him a new name, 'Foco', which is close to the Italian word for fire. The fire of Jesus present in the midst of those united in his name was being cast on the earth as Jesus wanted. The adventure of the Gospel was there for all, for Catholic and Anglican, for Reformed and Lutheran, for Orthodox and Free Church. And now there was a precise spirituality in existence with which to drive and guide it.

In the early sixties, the *Centro Uno* was set up in Rome by the Focolare Movement in order to facilitate the rapidly expanding ecumenical contacts between the Movement and the various branches of Christendom. Giordani was appointed its first Director. It seemed altogether appropriate for him to be in that post because of his competence, his experience in the ecumenical world, and now especially because of his committed living out of the spirituality of a movement whose daily passion was the Lord's prayer and dying wish: 'May they all be one' (Jn 17:21). Giordani was to work in the *Centro Uno* for fully fifteen years. There, the ever-increasing ecumenical contacts of the young movement found their focus and co-ordination. There, the wisdom and geniality of Giordani, coupled with his dry humour, found impressive expression.

From 1961, the *Centro Uno* organized thirty-seven ecumenical congresses. Giordani normally took part, delivering papers. The participants came from Europe, the Middle East, and the USA. He continued to write articles on the unity of Christians in such papers and reviews as *Oikumenikon*, *L'Osservatore Romano*, *L'Avvenire d'Italia*, *New City* and others. He always aimed at the collective memory in order to sensitise it to the duty of unity.

III. *Per Litteram ad Spiritum*: an Exegesis of Key New Testament Passages

In our account of the gradual discovery and development of the spirituality of the Focolare Movement, certain key texts stand out as the pillars that support that spirituality. These texts, in the main, were in St John together with the cry of forsakenness in Mark and Matthew. It is now time to look at these texts exegetically. We will

set off with those of St John.

In John, the only Son, who is turned towards the Father's heart, has 'exegeted' the Father (1:18). The point is that no one has ever seen the Father. Nothing infra-divine is able to communicate or bear the weight of the divine glory. The eternal Son, whose being consists in 'being towards the heart of the Father', is high enough to reveal and communicate him. This is why he becomes 'flesh' of our flesh to enable us creatures of flesh (3:6) to see his glory (1:14; 2:11). After the 'enfleshment', when he pitches his tent in our flesh, we can see his glory (1:14) which is the radiance of the love of the Father and the Son for each other and for us.

This gives us a lead into the Book of Signs, that sequence of seven 'miracle-signs' that serve to radiate the glory of the eternal Son into this world of violence and unlove. Thus, the first of the miracles, the changing of the water into wine at the wedding feast of Cana (2:1-12), had the effect of 'letting his glory be seen. His disciples believed in him [εἰς αὐτὸν]' (2:11). The last of the great signs of Jesus was that of the raising of Lazarus from the dead (11:1-44). But, far from this sign calling forth the faith of the Pharisees and the Chief Priests, it only provoked their rage. Caiaphas makes the fateful proposal that Jesus ought to die in order to prevent possible Roman repression. John sees in the High Priest's suggestion a deeper sense: 'He did not say this on his own, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus was about to die for the nation, and not only for the nation only but to gather into one the dispersed children of God' (11:51-2). This suggestion by the high priest is paradoxically a clear statement of the mission of Jesus, as well as of the means he will use to achieve his mission. The purpose of his coming is to gather together into one the scattered children of God so that 'there will be one flock, one shepherd' (Jn 10:16). The means that he will employ is the Cross: here one notices the significance of the central Johannine category of 'the hour' (2:4; 7:30; 8:20; 12:23, 27; 13:1; 17:1). The cross will be the focal point, the epitome of his whole life.

This linking of 'gathering' and 'the hour' needs a little unpacking. The tragic effect of sin had been the scattering of the human family and the distancing of the human family from the Creator. Chapter

three of Genesis and subsequent chapters describe in dramatic fashion that splintering and scattering in both its vertical and horizontal modes. The history of the Old Covenant is a history of the divine interventions that seek to reverse this scattering. God intends to introduce a counterforce to this very movement. This force would be released by Jesus' self-delivery on the Cross: 'And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself' (12:32). The scene is set for the Book of Glory and its 'Farewell Discourses' (chapters 13-17). There Jesus will draw out the blueprint for 'the Israel of God' (Gal 5:16). The components of this blueprint are the new commandment, the cross, unity as the first effect of the new commandment when lived, and an effective witness to the outside world that will lead it to faith in Jesus and in the Father who has sent him. It is imperative to look at each element in turn.

The New Commandment

Joachim Jeremias has ably demonstrated that Jesus in the Gospels always addresses God in prayer as 'Abba'.⁴ There is only one exception, that of the cry of forsakenness in the Synoptics (Mk 15:34; Mt 27:46), texts to which we will be turning our attention in due course. When one remembers the profound respect of Jews for the Divine Name, it becomes obvious that Jesus enjoys a unique consciousness of his filial relationship to God. Furthermore, Jesus calls God 'my Father' no less than twenty-eight times, and 'the Father' as often as seventy-five times in John. Jesus for his part is 'the Son' no fewer than fourteen times in John.⁵ This observation shows the nature of the wonder that the eternal Son has brought into human history on becoming flesh. It is this wonder that constitutes the core of the Farewell Discourse. There we are invited to join with the disciples as they eavesdrop on a conversation between 'the Son' and 'his Father'. This is the living matrix for appreciating the full meaning of the New Commandment.

⁴ See Joachim Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus*, 1967.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 29.

The commandment is new, not only because it is not present in the old covenant, but especially because it belongs to the new era which Jesus is bringing about by his going to the Father in his Passover. He is the fulfilment of the new covenant foretold powerfully in Jeremiah (31:31-33). The new covenant requires a new law. Jesus returns to this new law in 15:12: 'This is my commandment, that you love one another'. He has called this commandment 'new'; now he calls it 'his'. It is uniquely his, since it is the very law of his life with the Father. This law he now transposes to earth in order to root it in the hearts of his disciples. As an immigrant entering a strange new culture must both adapt to his new environment and still bring with him the life of his homeland, so too the eternal Son, who is nearest the Father's heart, adapts to his new milieu, on becoming man, but brings with him the life of his homeland. That life is nothing less than the life of love between divine Persons, indeed the very life of love between the Father and the Son.

This explains the mutuality or reciprocity that is a distinguishing characteristic of the New Commandment. Since 'the Father loves the Son' (5:20; 10:17) and the food of Jesus is to do the will of the one who sent him (4:34), the law that Jesus gives as primary and indispensable must underline the characteristic of reciprocity. The disciples of Jesus are called to love others. However, this is not enough. Their love, for which the New Testament uses the precise word, ἀγάπη, must be grounded in mutual giving and receiving and desiring unity. It is a love that is reminiscent of Aristotle's friendship-love (φιλία) when considered from the point of view of structure.⁶ It is lifted up, however, to a higher level which we will soon consider in the section on unity. One notices how John develops a theme by a 'spiral' mode of thinking, 'like a winding staircase always revolving around the same centre, always returning to the same topics, but at a higher level.'⁷ This fact is a key to the

⁶ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Books VIII and IX. The philosopher shows how friendship has three essential components, namely, at least two people, who wish each other well, and are conscious of doing so.

⁷ I. de la Potterie, *Adnotationes in Exegesis Primae Epistolae S. Johannis*, Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute Press, 1967, 8.

exegesis of the individual themes that are to follow, namely, the Cross, the unity of the disciples, and effective witness to Christ in the world.

The Cross is the Measure

In the opening verse of the Book of Glory, John underlines the measure of Jesus' love: 'he loved them to the end – εἰς τέλος (13:1). The love of Jesus for them is an absolute: it is not only an unconditional love; it is, above all, the love of the Son of the Father made flesh. The measure of the mutual love demanded of the disciples is stated in the same breath as the New Commandment: '...*Even as* I have loved you, that you also love one another' (13:34); 'love one another *as* I have loved you' (15:12). What is the measure of Jesus' love? It is a measure without measure, and is demonstrated on the Cross in 'the hour', which is the omega point of Jesus' ministry, the moment when he will draw all to himself (12:32). The 'as' (καθώς) in both verses indicates not only likeness, but also prolongation or assimilation to the love of Jesus. Authentic disciples are invited to love each other to the point that they are ready and willing to die for each other. 'Jesus loved them *'avec tendresse mais sans attendrissement'*, and this is the standard or example they are now being asked to emulate (see 12:32; 15:13).'⁸

The unity of Jesus' Disciples (17:11, 21-4, 26)

Following the staircase higher, one discovers the first effect of this mutual love: a singular unity of the disciples results. The precise shape of this unity is drawn out twice over, in verses 21 to 24. It is possible to discern a fivefold parallel between 21a-22a and 22b-24ab. It is enough to articulate the text to make the point.

⁸ Thomas Norris, 'The Marriage of Christians', in *Irish Theological Quarterly*, I (1985) 41.

- 21a 'That all may be one,
21b as you, Father, in me and I in you,
21c that they also may be in us,
21d that the world may believe you have sent
me.
22a And I have given them the glory you
have given me.'

- 22b 'That they may be one,
22c as we are one:
23ab I in them and you in me,
that they become perfectly one,
23cd that the world may know
you have sent me
and have loved them
as you have loved me.
24ab Father, I want those
you have given me
to be with me where I am,
so that they may always see
the glory you have given me.'

The spiralling staircase has reached its topmost rung. Jesus turns from the mode of direct speech to the mode of prayer. The unity that is to be the result of the New Commandment when put into practice, is of such importance and is so central to the mission of Jesus (Jesus in fact has lived his whole mission in the full awareness of being under a 'command' from the Father, 10:18), that he does not entrust it directly to the disciples, but, rather, to his Father, in prayer. Address becomes prayer, as it were.

What is the nature of the unity for which he prays? The answer is given at once: '*as* the Father and Jesus are one.' The 'one-ness' of the disciples, however, is going to be much more than mere resemblance. It is in fact going to be a participation in the relationship that obtains between the Father and Jesus: 'that they may be in us' (21c) and: 'I in them and you in me' (23a). In that

way, the disciples are invited and enabled to become a 'we' that participate in the eternal 'We' of the Father and Jesus, his incarnate Son.

Effective Witness to all (13:35; 17:21d, 23c).

If unity, that exceptional and gifted unity, is the first effect of the living out of the New Commandment, then all men will know that the disciples are the authentic followers of Jesus (13:35: 'By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another'). Furthermore, the world will recognize the very mission of Jesus from the Father (17:21d, '...that the world may believe that you have sent me'). Nowhere else in the whole of the New Testament is there such a clear identification of the effective key to the apostolate. The mission of the disciples will be fruitful if their 'we' participates in the 'We' of the Father and the Son. Their unity will be the convincing sign of the presence of God the holy Trinity in the world and in history. And it is striking to realize that such witness will be effective also in relation to those who are really outside – the word 'world' (the 'cosmos') does not refer simply to those who will listen but to all, even those who are opposed to Jesus but who are vulnerable to the witness of genuine mutual love among Christians. In 17:21-4 Jesus describes a way of life for his followers that will have the power of persuading even a hostile humanity.

The Cry of Forsakenness (Mk 15:34; Mt 27:46)

It is highly significant that the cry of abandonment is the only 'word from the cross' in Mark and Matthew. It is also highly significant that Mark gives it in Aramaic, Jesus' mother tongue: '*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani*'. The history of its exegesis, however, has been content, generally speaking, to see nothing in it beyond Jesus praying Psalm 22. This canon of interpretation, however, has been challenged effectively since roughly the end of World War II. It is as if the horrors of that 'difficult century' have made it more difficult to talk about God *without this central icon of the Gospel*. In any case, this text has been a major point of convergence for

Orthodox, Protestant and Catholic theologians since the end of World War II.⁹

The true significance of the cry resides not so much in its historical nature as in its theological value. It is a revelatory word of God on the death of Christ. Walter Kasper remarks perceptively: 'If as he was dying he cries out for God, then he cries not only for the God of the Old Testament but for the God whom he called his Father in an exclusive sense and to whom he knew himself to be bound in a unique way.'¹⁰ Mark, in fact, locates the cry in the unique rapport of Jesus with God. That rapport was revealed in its depth when Jesus only hours earlier in the Garden had called this same God, 'Abba' (Mk 14:36). In Gethsemane, Jesus accepted that he had to drink the chalice of suffering to the end. Now it begins to emerge that, over and above the sequence of rapid events unfolding during the dramatic journey of Jesus to Jerusalem, there unfolds another story that is hidden from the eyes of flesh, the story of love between the Son and the Father. This means that the cry is in perfect harmony with the central thrust of Mark, a fact confirmed by the phenomenon of the centurion providing the first complete act of faith: 'Truly this man was God's Son' (Mk 15:39).

According to Ross , the cry is to be interpreted as expressing the depth of God's saving love.¹¹ It does this in three ways. It addresses, firstly, the human condition of suffering and abandonment. Next, it speaks to a modern godless world. Finally, it is the revelation, measure and source of Christian love *par excellence*.

The cry expresses a 'why?' question. Now there is a 'why?' in every heart, sometimes very great, sometimes minuscule. In this moment, Jesus is one with every man and woman, not only in an ontological

⁹ One could mention Sergei Bulgakov, Jurgen Moltmann and Hans Urs von Balthasar as Orthodox, Lutheran and Catholic instances, respectively.

¹⁰ W. Kasper, *Jesus der Christus*, Mainz, 1974, 140.

¹¹ Gerard Ross, *The cry of Jesus on the Cross: a Biblical and Theological Study* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987) chapter 7, 115-128.

way but also existentially and concretely. Henceforth there is no pain, no sorrow, no lostness, no darkness, no forsakenness that is not entered and appropriated by the Son of God. 'Every cry of abandonment involves the Trinity, every 'why?' belongs to the very Mystery of divinity.'¹² This surely is 'the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, *the Son of God*' (Mk 1:1) in the sense that it is first in importance in the good news. We have been found in all our abandonment and distance from God. We are no longer beyond the love of the crucified and forsaken Redeemer. The abandoned Son has re-located god-forsaken humanity between himself and his 'Abba'.

The forsaken Christ is also the God for modern atheists. He is without the sensation of his Father's presence, just as atheists are without God and feel far from him. Contemporary atheism is a face of the forsaken Christ. Finally, this Christ is the source and the measure of Christian love. Since he is God he is love. Too much love, however, made him feel forsaken, and in this he appears to be only a man. He teaches an art of loving which is to be one with the other 'to the end'. To love the other in that way requires one to be truly poor in spirit (Mt 5:3; II Cor 8:9). This abandoned Christ loses everything for love, except love.

It is time to conclude this all too brief account of an exceptional ecumenical vocation and mission. Igino Giordani, whose life spanned most of the last century, was, from his early years, drawn to study, pray and work for the restoration of unity among Christians. It was the biblical and patristic witness of the early centuries that inspired him initially in his apostolate of writing and research, as well as in his professional calling as a politician. The encounter, however, with Chiara Lubich and the spirituality of unity of the Focolare Movement in 1948 was a kind of second springtime in his professional and ecumenical life. He now had a spirituality that could drive and inspire the work of finding unity among Christians so 'that the world will believe'. Since the cry of forsakenness and the New Commandment were connected in this

¹² *Ibid.*, 115.

spirituality, not only as two sides of one and the same coin, but also as cause to effect, it was appropriate to look exegetically at these two Gospel texts. Perhaps the life of Igino Giordani bears witness to the riches of these texts as they are enfleshed in the spirituality of unity of the Focolare Movement and in the Movement's continuing work for the unity of all Christians.

Thomas J. Norris,
Maynooth.

Alan E. Lewis, *Between Cross and Resurrection: a Theology of Holy Saturday* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001): a review by R.Alan Russell

This could easily have been a self-indulgent book for much of it was written amidst the anxiety, weakness, pain and anguish which are the inevitable human components of a terminal illness. Many would have been tempted to have exploited a situation which 'almost demanded to be thought of as an Easter Sunday analogy' (p.403), 'one more example of the rather pietistic and exhibitionist discussions of suffering of which the religious market seems to be full today' (p.xii), appealing to the emotion among friends and admirers, which can so easily dismiss any criticism as sacrilege. Instead, Alan Lewis has left us the legacy of a clear headed treatment of an important topic accompanied by a passion which always looks outward to the record of Scripture, the history of theology and the suffering of a wider world where even his own story appears within the context of the personal life we all share.

This is a carefully written book, crafted in a style confirming the many years of thought behind its composition. There is a sense that many of the key passages have been revisited many times for the language to be polished and the images refined. And for those who might not have noticed, the footnotes show how easily and effectively the writing engages with the various developments of theological scholarship as Lewis delivers verdicts that are invariably trenchant and worth-while, even for those who might disagree with his analysis. As with so many books designed for the 'general reader', 'a clergy person or someone with a little theological knowledge' (p.xi), *Between Cross and Resurrection* is a much more demanding and enduring piece of work than the rather modest claims of its author would suggest.

In considering the significance of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, theologians have tended to base their reflections either on the events of the first Good Friday, or the first Easter Sunday.

Lewis's argument is that, in order to consider these happenings in their proper perspective, we need to begin from the neglected day that separates them, the hours of Easter Saturday. What realities about Jesus Christ and about God are we forced to confront on 'a day which forces us to speak of hell and to conceive how it might be that God's own self, lay dead and cold within a sepulcher .. to think about with the widest stretching of our minds and our imaginations; and to make our own, as the key to learning how to live and even how to die'?

Lewis divides his approach into three parts: Hearing the Story, Thinking the Story and Living the Story. This is in line with his preference for narrative theology which he introduces in the first chapter briefly, yet not without extensive reference to other theological writings. Following Jungel's idea of the 'presumable presumption', he goes on to affirm the 'God who speaks and comes to us as Word, in words' (p.18). The use of words includes the telling of stories. Christians follow a Jesus who told stories within the context of a Hebrew background where God acted in the events of history. Thus 'profound concepts and complex doctrines are finally no better match than stories for the heights and depths of the divine' (p.21). It is the story of the events behind the Gospel which conveys the initial impact of its truth. The story is always prior to the structures of doctrine and perpetually challenges our attempts to rationalise the truth that the Gospel presents. 'Only down this intellectual path of disorientation and reorientation, of destruction and remaking, can the point be reached where what we think and say bears some correspondence to what the stories told about God actually convey' (p.25)

The rest of Part One: Hearing the Story, is an exercise in demonstrating how the account of Jesus Christ which takes seriously the reality of the dead body lying in the tomb defies any attempt at explanation in terms of a comfortable theological system. In other words, the story is irreducible. 'We are to avoid any method which, before we even begin, makes it hard, or even impossible, for us to hear in the three-day story a Word that could confound our intellects, overturn our morality, and shock, surprise, and change us, body, mind, and spirit' (p.17). Lewis detects, even in the Gospel narratives themselves, 'the church's inclination to look

for ways of blunting the cruciform sharpness of Christ's earthly destiny' (p.36). Thus 'it strains credibility' to interpret the opening words of Psalm 22 uttered from the cross as anything other than a cry of dereliction and despair rather than as an evocation of the whole psalm, and the alternatives of Luke and John appear as if they have '*selected* the easy memory for preservation in preference to the scandalous.' But what happened during the period of Christ's death while his body lay in the tomb? The traditional answer of the descent into hell has its accompanying dangers for Lewis. To identify it as the point where 'humiliation ends to make way for exaltation' (p.39) is to threaten the destructiveness of the cross with all its horror and anticipate the role of the resurrection. If we take the cross seriously we are committed to the reality of death 'in all its unabbreviated malignancy and infernal horror. In the same way the resurrection only has its impact if it is from death that is real and final.

The next two chapters are thus an exploration of the reality of what it means for Jesus Christ to die. Lewis explores this by lifting a series of Biblical phrases. Isaiah 53:9 invites us to think through what it was for Jesus Christ to be assigned 'a grave with the wicked'. Here Lewis returns to his idea of the first 'hearing' of the story, without anticipation of its end. Within this context the Saturday of burial can only be seen from any angle as total failure in the most ignoble sense. The teaching of Jesus has been exposed as falsehood and his claim to righteousness as guilt. Even more radical is a suggestion of the failure of God the Father himself, open to the charge of forsaking the Son and abandoning the world to the forces of evil. 'We have not listened to the Gospel story of the cross and the grave until we have construed this cold dark sabbath as the day of atheism' (p.56). It is necessary for us to take in the depth of this despair if we are to grasp the full significance of what it means for Christ to be 'raised for our acquittal' (Romans 4:24). Again, certain well-intentioned treatments of the resurrection theme can threaten the integrity of the Gospel Story. It will not do to explain it terms of the rhythms of nature or anything else that would reduce it to a mirror of the familiar. 'Easter is surely the *ground* of hope for human beings and the cosmos rather than an *example* of life's self-perpetuation, for it identifies God and God alone as the one who makes death's defeat possible and gives new existence to the

terminated' (Romans 4:17; p.60). It is only from the unique disruption and horror of a dead and buried Christ that we can relive the impact of the unfolding first telling of the story. The transformation of the disciples, even the vindication of God himself as the failure and disgrace of Jesus Christ is transformed into righteousness and truth and his claim to Sonship, so questionable and doubtful in death - all are now confirmed. '...It is in the very world of sickness, death and sin that joy and play take place, and Christ is Lord; and it is *only* in the context of injustice, negativity, and despair that we dare to speak of hope' (p.67).

On the other hand, the very idea of God in the grave recalls the words of Luke 24:5 'Why do you look for the living among the dead?' For Lewis, the deepest mystery of the Christian faith is the occupied tomb with its accompanying question: who must the crucified have been, and why was he buried if he is the risen one (p.69)? And again, what kind of life is it that comes to birth among the dead, and what kind of death could yield up its defeated victim to victorious life (p.76)? Here Lewis stresses what he describes as the second hearing of the Gospel story. 'Knowing now what happens on the third day, we are bound to have a different, more complex view of what takes place on the first' (p.77). Consequently, we are prompted to ask how it is that death and darkness can turn into life and light and, especially, how, in this case, such life and light can be born out of and determined by the death of all things, perhaps even God himself. To grasp the true significance of the Gospel narrative Lewis uses the analogy of stereo sound where both channels are necessary to give a sense of space and dimension to a recording. One channel is our sense of the first hearing of the story with its initial raw impact of shock, disappointment and failure, whereas the second includes our reflection and questioning of a familiar account. Thus 'The second day boundary between the cross and the empty tomb is the balance knob which secures equilibrium between novelty and familiarity' (p.78). Lewis maintains that 'it is only when we listen to both stories in this way that we can hope to glimpse what the Scriptures mean when they say that the cross is God's greatest power and wisdom, and that only in dying may human beings live' (p.78). The first hearing of the story reaches a stage where the death and burial of Jesus imply that either he had never been 'God's love and power enfleshed .. or, worse still, that

this had been God's last, best effort' against 'the darkness of destruction' (p.79). However, as the story proceeds 'a reversal of that Saturday has taken place, as thorough in its scope as unforeseeable in its surprise' (p.79). Thus the verdicts on the Father, that he has abandoned the Son, and on the Son, that he has failed, have been rewritten. The resurrection demonstrates that God has kept faith with the Son after all and the claims of Jesus so disproved in his death have been confirmed; God 'has secured *self-vindication* and regained credibility' (p.80). And since God has not rejected Christ this, in turn means 'God's Amen to every fellow man and woman among whom Jesus lived and alongside whom he died' (p.80).

Lewis contends that pondering the now familiar story confronts us with something even more shocking, for we now know the identity of the one who lay buried. The corpse is that of God incarnate. Given the significance that the resurrection assigns to the events of the past, we discover 'the self-expression, in the event of a human life, of who God is. Where this person has gone, has been God's locus and who he has been, God's identity; what he has done, God's action; what he has suffered, God's passion; and - dare we say and think it? - how he has died, God's perishing' (p.82). 'Easter exaltation has assured us that the Son of God is precisely whom the grave contains' (p.83). It therefore makes sense to speak of the failure of God to be true to his own nature who 'at the crucial moment, making common cause with godlessness and reprobation, has failed to be a God of love and power; the Father surrendering the Son, the Son surrendering to evil and to death...' (p.83). However, it is humanity which is the reason for God's failure. Through the killing of the Son, we have brought God himself to end of his resources, 'crucified the Son of God, laid him in the ground and driven him to hell' (p.84). But it is this identification by God with 'the disgraced, the despairing, and the dead' (p.89) that leads to human acquittal. Lewis asks: '... Would there be a Christian *gospel* were it *not* true that God has been found among the dying and the dead, where the absence of all life and hope and light proclaims that even God has gone away? Would there truly be forgiveness for the guilty, healing and wholeness for the broken, a home for the rejected, and a coming day of laughter for a world of tears, did God not know how to weep the tears of fear and loneliness, to endure the

torment of hunger and disease, and to be identified with godforsakenness and transience? Conversely, would there be a *Christian* gospel were it not true that God is self-unveiled only *sub contrario*, that is, in the very opposite of Godness, hidden amid the outcasts of the earth who, often in the name of God and of the church are rejected and despised?" (p.90). 'Could the God we know conceivably refrain from identity with humanity at its lowest, hell-like depths? And could the consequence of such profound self-giving be anything less than the snapping of the deadly power of self-regard and sin?'

Thus, by the passion of his thinking and the power of his language, Lewis has swept us to a conclusion which turns out to be his theory of atonement. The humiliation and death of Jesus of Nazareth is nothing less than the humiliation and death of God himself, radically and completely - 'the death of the living God' (p.91). It would seem that God's identifying, in love, with the worst of what human beings suffer and deserve, including the finality of death, and the fact that such love is ultimately indestructible, means that the power of sin has been broken and human redemption has been achieved.

Lewis does accept that there are difficult conceptual consequences that arise from his conclusions and the second part of the book is designed to deal with them, as he attempts to set his convictions within the historical development of Christian theology. He is certainly prepared to revise and even reject traditional doctrines and formulations which might lessen the impact of his conclusions and which attempt to resolve the contradictions which he regards as an inevitable result of the Gospel accounts.

As we might expect of one who spent his working life immersed in the writings of Christian theology, Lewis's consideration of his position within the history and development of Christian doctrine includes a lucid survey which many a rusty theologian should find useful, and offers a valuable insight into the direction of twentieth century theological thought. However, his consideration of classical theology is from the perspective of its 'temptation to deaden, if not wholly neutralise, the subversive impact of "the word of the cross"' (p.163). Doctrines of the impassibility and immutability of God,

combined with the two-nature view of Christ, conspired to preserve God from tasting human suffering, never mind death itself. The "scandal of the cross" was 'compromised by imposition upon the story of preconceived notions of what is possible, and not, for God to be and do' (p.161). In spite of its 'commitment to an event of real union between humanity and God' (p.161), classical theology can only be an invitation to further thinking and reform, especially when we take the step or removing the prohibitions Greek philosophy. Thus we must move beyond Aquinas and even Calvin. Lewis sees the beginnings of much needed change in the role of *Kenosis* in Lutheran doctrine and its development in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The change happens supremely in the theology of Karl Barth. 'Undermining every alien supposition of impassibility as God's essential nature, Barth forces theology to conform to the story of crucifixion, death, and burial' (p.193). However, the event of the cross is still to be presented within a transformed understanding of the Trinity, involving 'the replacement of a static metaphysic of pure being with the dynamism of divine becoming and historicity, where temporal activity and change are not the contradiction but expression of God's identity' (p.197). Thus we need to retreat from the Augustinian view that the deity of all three persons derive from an ontologically prior source, and resort to the original Cappadocian idea of God as a communal being. It is this relational idea of being that has been developed by Barth and, more recently, by Moltmann, Jungel, Gunton and others. Lewis's guidance through their writings is confident and illuminating. The result, for him, is the establishment of 'the thought that on Easter Saturday, in the tomb of Jesus of Nazareth between his crucifying and his raising, God lay dead' (p.255).

Perhaps unusually for a work of theology, Alan Lewis devotes a good half of his book to exploring the practical outworkings of his doctrinal convictions. 'Living the story in world history' features the predictable but necessary account of the trauma of our world and the events of the twentieth century, which so often brought human optimism to its knees. The traditional doctrine of providence becomes another casualty of Lewis's transformed thinking about the nature of God. Instead, prayer and Christian hope are focused on 'a lordship over history marked precisely by the visible weakness and folly of the crucified and buried Jesus' (p.301). Like God himself,

Christians can only triumph in hope through the surrender of power which also involves the abandonment of optimism. Just as God himself experienced the worst of disasters before resurrection glory, so there is always the hazard that the worst might happen to our world before 'the triune God...creates new beginnings for the world beyond death and cataclysm' (p.300). Living out such a surrender of power has implications for politics in reconciliation, work for justice, surrendering 'today's all pervasive myth of limitlessness' (p.327), for limits upon economic growth, technological development, agricultural productivity and the depletion of the earth's resources. However, there is an ambivalence about the prospect of the long-term future of the world, which 'rests not in the linear advance, powerful, unthwarted, guaranteed, as classical eschatology supposed...For God, the maker and deliverer of history, shall be, until the end, always at hazard to time's outrageous forfeiture of meaning and of purpose' (p.300). At the same time, there is the possibility that, should the church really wake up to its potential, the power of 'fragile grace' could transform the planet and its future. On the other hand 'the church is that community which anticipates... the world's own future of redeemed togetherness ... often called *shalom* and named the New Jerusalem' (p.386).

The ills of our contemporary society are treated to a similar analysis in terms of 'our era's Easter Sunday loss of community' (p.343). Here, the call is for the Church to take on its true role as the body of Christ, making his presence present, visible, and concrete in the world. As the body of Christ, the church is called on to share his suffering and death in the world, 'letting itself be the sent and buried church which makes it grave with the wretched and the wicked, the victims and perpetrators of our culture's termination and society's collapse (p.347). Lewis's call for transformation in the attitudes and institution of the church is yet another challenge for the Christian community to be the servant, prophetic and priestly body. 'How might the rulers of this system quake if for a moment they thought that Christians truly meant to live defiantly according to their whispered petitions and strange, simple signs of bread and wine?' (p.399).

'Living the story in personal life' includes Alan Lewis's personal experience of what turned out to be a terminal illness. In the course

of the chapter, he argues that mortality was always the true, intended condition of humanity, endorsed by the story of the cross and the empty tomb. But death does not have the last word on our human destiny. Again, the chapter has worthwhile reflections on our temporality and experience of waiting. At the same time, we are captive to a death which is so often far from easy or peaceful, and the gospel does give us a hope for 'gratuitous renewal after death' (p.443). But 'resurrection hope is not for easy, kind release...Our hope is for that "eschatological surplus" after the fact and finality of our extinction...a share, that is, in God's own triune life' (p.428).

This book is the confident practical testimony of a formidable contemporary theologian prepared to apply his convictions to the everyday realities of the world and his personal life. Indeed, in many ways, this book underlines some comments made by Ronald Goetz back in 1986: 'However, as we near the end of the century, we can begin to make out some of the larger features of the theological landscape. Indeed, despite all the real and intractable differences among theologians, a curious new consensus has arisen. The age-old dogma that God is impassible and immutable, incapable of suffering, is for many no longer tenable. The ancient theopaschite heresy that God suffers has, in fact, become the new orthodoxy...It appears that 20th-century theology will leave the 21st century with a completed revolution, but with the doctrinal consolidation of that revolution far from complete. One can only wonder how the next century will deal with what we have left it.'¹

Perhaps Alan Lewis did come close to completing the revolution and setting the agenda for the present century. As such, he has shown how the theological development in which he has played so prominent a part, has a determining relevance to Christian living. On the other hand, it is hard to see how classical theology will disappear. It is interesting to note that, during the time Lewis was forming his views, books were still being written defending the traditional attributes of God. Reading the book has caused me to

¹ *Christian Century* (April 16, 1986) p. 385.

wonder how far we are really dealing with ultimate value judgments that underlie the construction of theological systems. For example, Lewis's passionate and compelling case in the first part of the book, depends on the success of his crucial argument that the gospel story makes his conclusions inevitable. I believe that there are problems here. Argument on the basis of a story can only be compelling where the account is identifiable and relatively unambiguous. As far as the New Testament is concerned, we have to reach what are often contentious conclusions about how much genuine narrative we have about the course of events concerning Jesus Christ and the extent to which the Gospel accounts include later reflections of the church community. If we accept that this is the case, then, to an important extent, we have to choose what the story is.

However, it seems to me that Lewis has had to go even further. There is a sense in which his form of the passion story is moulded by the conclusions he wishes to draw. Interpreting the words of forsakenness from the cross as a quotation from Psalm 22 is rejected by Lewis because 'it strains credibility that Jesus would have uttered words complaining of God's distance if that was the opposite of his true feelings' (p.36). Any deviation from the story that so emphatically yields Lewis's conclusions is 'blunting the cruciform sharpness of Christ's earthly destiny' (p.36). He writes as follows: 'And when Christians agree that God could not give hope to those who are beyond all hope by becoming one with them in their godlessness, or that God would not conquer sin and death by first succumbing to them, coming as a *servant* Lord, a *guilty* judge, a *wounded* healer, they simply share with their critics the natural assumption of the human mind that between God and human perishing and frailty there can be no unrestricted dealings' (p.91). Such a statement seems to be based on a strongly felt intuition that the conceptual parameters of classical theology are incapable of generating a stumbling block to the Jews and folly to the Gentiles. What, then does someone like Lewis say to those whose intuitions demand that the supreme object of worship must combine the classical attributes with the love that sent his only begotten Son into the world? Or have we, in theology, reached the kind of situation when two people passionately disagree as to whether the latest winner of the Turner Prize has produced something which is really a

work of art? It will be interesting to see.

R.Alan Russell